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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT
 VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, DBENZE AND AFERNANDEZ,
 IIP/G/NEA-SA RWINCHESTER
 WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
 CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A
 TAGS: KMDR, PREL, KPAO, OPRC, SY
 SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: GCC Summit, IIC, Iraq,
 Palestinian Territories 12/20)

1. Summary: Syrian papers today reported the final
 communique of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit that
 underlined commitment to the security and stability of Syria
 and Lebanon, adding that Syria had cooperated with the
 international investigation into the assassination of former
 Premier Rafik al-Hariri. The GCC summit expressed relief at
 Syria's cooperation with German prosecutor Mehlis and at
 Syria's position regarding UNSC resolution 1644.

All papers featured a statement by Mohammed Khaleifa, Media

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
 REVIEW AUTHORITY: ARCHIE M BOLSTER
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Advisor to the Deputy Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates, stressing that the ICC report into the assassination of al-Hariri is "a failure because it is based on false testimony, so the commission must restart the investigation from point zero." Khaliefa said that "the fabrication of false witnesses has failed," asserting that "the head of the commission has become aware of Syria's innocence." He added, "Because the commission has failed to find a definite accusation against Syria, the US will not be able to achieve its schemes against Syria." He pointed out that it is obvious that the commission is working according to a pre-arranged agenda to accuse Syria.

Government-owned Tishreen carried an op-ed by Dr. Buthaina Sha'ban, Syrian Minister of Expatriates, commenting on a recent article by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice published in "The Washington Post" on freedom and democracy. Dr. Sha'ban stressed that "freedom and democracy can be achieved only through justice, equality, ending of occupation, and participation of the entire world in the fight against terrorism based on internationally defined principles and strategies."

2. Selected Headlines:

"The GCC summit calls for ridding the Middle East of WMD and expresses relief at Syria's cooperation with the IIC" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 12/20)

"The GCC summit underscores the importance of the security and sovereignty of Syria and Lebanon" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 12/20)

"The United Arab Emirates: The IIC report is a failure. Fabrication of false witnesses has failed" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 12/20)

"Jordanian papers condemn the vicious exploitation of the assassination crimes: Mehlis targeted Syria with fake testimony" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 12/20)

"Iranian Vice-President arrives in Damascus" (Government-owned Tishreen, 12/20)

"The Amal Movement reiterates its determination to maintain distinguished relations with Syria. The Moslem Scholars Gathering holds Israeli agents responsible for explosions in Lebanon" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 12/20)

"Lahoud expresses solidarity with the boycotting ministers. Al-Saniara brandishes UNSC resolution 1559. The Muslim Scholars Gathering: Destroying Lebanese reconciliation is a

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violation of the Taif Accord" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 12/20)

"Bush acknowledges difficulty of the war on Iraq and the mistakes of US intelligence and calls on Americans not to surrender to despair" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 12/20)

"A US marine is killed in Baghdad. The military operation in Al-Anbar is resumed. The Unified Iraqi Coalition leads in preliminary elections results" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 12/20)

"13 Israeli raids on Gaza. The Palestinian Authority: A deliberate escalation to block elections" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 12/20)

3. Editorial Block Quotes:

"The Message of UNSC Resolution 1644"

Muhammed Khair al-Jamali, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, commented (12/20): "The US State Department spokesman's commented on Resolution 1644, saying: If the Syrian government believes the world will turn its eyes away from the investigation and stop searching for the killers of Al-Hariri, then it is wrong....

"Does this American comment mean that Syria was satisfied with the Security Council resolution while the US Administration and the original drafters of the resolution were not? Both conclusions are correct. The resolution did not contain sanctions or threaten to use them as Washington wanted and applied pressure to achieve. Nor did the resolution support the call to expand the international investigation commission's mission to include other recent assassinations in Lebanon....

"But the United States was dissatisfied not only because the resolution came out as it did, but also because a number of countries rejected the original draft, which was meant to politicize the investigation.

"China, Russia, Algeria, and Brazil rejected the original draft resolution because it had political objectives out of harmony with the provisions of the UN Charter.... Through Resolution 1644, China, Russia, Algeria, and Brazil broke the American-Western control on the United Nations and its Security Council.... If Russia and China continue to cooperate with Arabs and the Third World countries against the American-Western monopoly of the United Nations, the United States will no longer be able to use the international organization and the Security Council as an instrument to pressure the world and tailor it to its own model and interests."

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"US Democracy and Israeli Interests"

Ali Nasrallah, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (12/20): "The US House of Representatives' decision on HAMAS' participation in the Palestinian elections is a flagrant interference in the affairs and options of the countries of the region under the slogan of spreading democracy...."

"The United States no longer feels ashamed to use pressure and political blackmail in its foreign policy. However, the American decision against HAMAS and the PA is not surprising, as it reflects the US Administration's known bias toward and full adoption of Israel's extremist and anti-peace positions."

"The United States' eagerness to safeguard Israel's security and protect its interests is undoubtedly the basic factor in the US policy, which conflicts with international laws and resolutions and the UN Charter. But its interference in Palestinian affairs in this way, under the guise of democracy and the war on terror, is blackmail, a serious disregard for all principles, and an attempt to abolish the Palestinian people's right to resistance, self-determination, and the building of their democratic system, in which HAMAS is a basic pillar, as the movement enjoys broad popular support, as appeared clearly in the victory it achieved in the recent municipal elections."

"How Can We Save Today's World?"

Buthaina Sha'ban, Minister of Expatriates, wrote (12/19): "I have read with great interest Ms. Condaleeza Rice's article that was published in The Washington Post on 11 December 2005 under the title 'The Promise of Democratic Peace: Why Promoting Freedom Is the Only Realistic Path to Security'...."

"In her article she summarized US policy as seeking 'to end tyranny and dictatorship in the world by changing the nature of regimes, and creating well-governed democratic states that can meet the needs of their citizens and conduct themselves responsibly in the international system. That is, the US Administration believes that the danger comes from the states that do not have good regimes."

"Ms. Rice's article coincided with the wide media coverage of the scandal of secret prisons set up by the US intelligence service in several European and Asian states and what that means in practice, namely, that the authorities of the most powerful democratic state are arresting and torturing suspects in those prisons that are

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located outside the jurisdiction of [American] law. I was surprised by Ms Rice's justification of the existence of such a policy of arrests and torture -- and perhaps death under torture -- by saying it contributed to saving the lives of Europeans, without commenting on those who were arrested and tortured and who may have been innocent and fallen victim merely for coming under suspicion, often as a result of having an Arab or Muslim name or a dark Mediterranean complexion....

"It can be said that Ms. Rice's premises will not lead to the world to which everyone aspires, for many reasons: Good and evil have existed since the beginning of creation. Therefore it is not realistic or logical for the United States to undertake the task of eliminating evil from the world and cleanse it of that evil, and terrorism is absolute evil....

"The strategy of achieving 'democratic peace' has ignored a fundamental and vital matter for mankind since its birth, namely, the rejection of the principle of foreign occupation of the territory of others. Such occupation constitutes the worst form of degradation of human dignity and the aspirations of people to freedom. How then can democratic peace be built in the Middle East when the Israeli occupation is stifling the Arabs in Palestine, the Golan Heights, and southern Lebanon....?

"It is necessary to focus on the principle of justice and the human right to equal human dignity. There is no doubt that that does not exist at all today, in the light of the financing of media campaigns that disseminate misleading news, and in the light of shelving documents that condemn the policies of aggression, war crimes, and state terrorism.

"The mistaken and dangerous concept on which the policies of a superpower have been built is that the Middle East has produced an ideology of hatred, while that region is in fact a model of a longstanding historical coexistence among the followers of the divine religions....

"Undoubtedly, the emergence of a few individuals who feel great anger as a result of the lack of justice and dignity and express such anger in unacceptable criminal ways does not mean there are no alternatives for putting matters right if the will and intention exist, and does not mean that the peoples of the region do not resist terrorism and injustice. However, injustice is the solid basis on which terror and terrorists flourish."

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